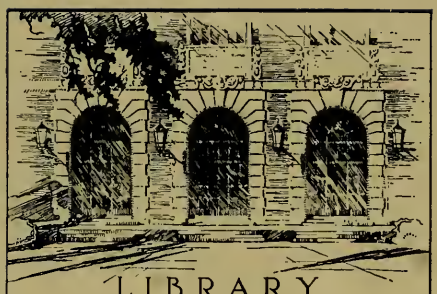

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# MR GLADSTONE'S SCOTCH SPEECHES

BEING

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*DELIVERED AT EDINBURGH, DEC. 12, 1879*

TO THE

## CONSERVATIVE WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION

BY

ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR

OF WHITTINGHAME, M.P.

*REVISED BY THE AUTHOR*

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLXXX

# MR GLADSTONE'S SCOTCH SPEECHES.

MR BALFOUR, who was received with loud cheers, said,—I cannot enter into what I have got to say to you on the large political subjects with which I have to deal, without first thanking Sir George Warrender for the kind and flattering—too flattering—expressions with which he has introduced me to you. He alluded to the fact that I was Lord Salisbury's private secretary. Gentlemen, I am proud of the connection. But I ought to say that I come here to address you, not as Lord Salisbury's private secretary, but as an independent, although loyal and steadfast, supporter of her Majesty's Government, and as a near neighbour of your own. When my friend Mr Usher wrote to me some two months back, and did me the honour of asking me to address the Conservative Working Men's Association, he said in his letter that I might choose my own subject. Gentlemen, as events have turned out, there is no choice in the matter. Accident has fixed the date on which I am to address you at a time when no man speaking on political subjects in Scotland, and more especially in Mid-Lothian, can do otherwise than occupy himself with the interminable series of speeches with which Mr Gladstone has lately favoured us. There are many reasons, gentlemen, of a purely personal kind which make me desire that the task of criticising those speeches had fallen on somebody else. But speaking as I do, not yet four days after the last speech has been delivered from the last railway station, and considering, as I must, the number and the nature of the accusations which Mr Gladstone has thought fit to bring against her Majesty's Government, the party which support her Majesty's Government, and more especially the Foreign Secretary, there is no choice for me but to deal as shortly as I can with some of the points on which he has touched. Gentlemen, political controversy in this country has lately been sullied by language which ought never to be

admitted, I think, into our discussions, however hot our political feelings may be. Language has been used in a bad cause which would, in my opinion, disgrace any cause. I shall attempt to avoid these faults; but I am obliged to address myself to what Mr Gladstone has said in a manner, and with a directness, which cannot but appear personal, and that for this reason. Mr Gladstone is not merely an able and acrimonious critic,—he is much more than this. Not this country only, but Europe also, looks to him as the successor of the Government should the Government be turned out. Therefore his words have a value and importance to us even beyond the ability which always mark them. We see in him not only a critic of the Government, but the would-be successor of the Government; and if we want to know what the policy is which will be pursued by this country when the present Government loses the confidence of the electors, it behoves us to study most carefully the speeches of Mr Gladstone. Mr Gladstone, in the course of his remarks, has made accusations of so wide a character on the policy of the Government that there must always be some difficulty in knowing where to begin. He has dwelt on finance, agriculture, and legislation. He has criticised the home policy of the Government. Above all, he has criticised the foreign policy of the Government, and that with the utmost minuteness and detail. I shall have to contradict directly a large number of the statements he has made. I shall have to point out to you that he has not only erred in the inferences he has drawn, that he has not only misunderstood the policy of the Government, but that he has actually misstated a large number of facts. But, gentlemen, I ought to say, at the same time, that I wish to make no imputations on the veracity or conscientiousness of Mr Gladstone. How he has come to the conclusions he has arrived at, where he got the facts which he has put before the electors of Mid-Lothian, I do not know; but I am bound to suppose, and I do suppose, that in making these statements he was actuated, as I hope all public men are actuated, by conscientious motives. With this preface, gentlemen, I now proceed to what Mr Gladstone has said on the foreign policy of the Government.

You are aware, gentlemen, that in the course of the many speeches which Mr Gladstone has thought fit to deliver, he has found in his copious vocabulary a very large number of somewhat abusive phrases. Out of one speech I took the trouble to-day to collect the following set of epithets applied to the existing Government. They are accused of acting with "secrecy" and "corruption"; they are accused of "cupidity"; their policy is declared to be "mean," to be "shabby," to be "dastardly," to be "disloyal," and to be "subversive." If any of these things are true, gentlemen,

there is no doubt that her Majesty's Government will not deserve to retain the confidence of the country; but I hope to show you that, in all the cases where Mr Gladstone has thought fit to apply these epithets to the policy of the Government, he has either misunderstood that policy, or he was wholly in error about the facts. Mr Gladstone, in surveying the career of the present Government, divides it into two halves; and he draws the dividing line at the time that Lord Derby and Lord Carnarvon left the Government—though we were bad before that period, we have been much worse since. It appears that these noble Lords exercised, in his opinion, the most salutary effect upon the course the Government was pursuing: but yet I am not sure, if Mr Gladstone's words are candidly considered, that these two noble Lords will have any cause to congratulate themselves upon the compliment that Mr Gladstone has paid them; because, if I understood Mr Gladstone's position rightly, he attributes all our misfortunes in Africa to the occupation of the Transvaal, which was done by Lord Carnarvon,—and all our misfortunes in Europe to the rejection of the Berlin Memorandum, which was done by Lord Derby. And, gentlemen, *apropos* of the Berlin Memorandum, Mr Gladstone gave us a very curious piece of secret history respecting the Liberal party. He explained to us that it was entirely from patriotic motives that the Liberal party abstained from criticising the Government when the Government decided to reject that Memorandum. They behaved, according to Mr Gladstone, exactly as Sir George Warrender in his opening remarks told us that an Opposition ought to behave,—they trusted the Government in the details of foreign negotiations. Here Mr Gladstone seems to have done great injustice to the virtues of the Liberal party; because, unless my memory greatly deceives me, their patriotism was not only equal to the effort of abstaining from criticising the policy of the Government,—it was so self-denying that it actually prompted them to go about saying that they liked it! So far as I recollect in all the history of party politics, that is the greatest act of disinterestedness as yet on record. But I do not wish to detain you on the subject of the Berlin Memorandum except for this one object,—it is concerning the Berlin Memorandum that Mr Gladstone first makes that charge, which he constantly repeats afterwards with regard to almost every action of the Government in the East—the charge, namely, that our policy destroyed what is called the European concert. In other words, he implies that the Great Powers of Europe, acting together, were prepared to carry out a policy, and that England refusing to join with them, their action was effectually frustrated. Now, gentlemen, the accusation with regard to this and to the other cases to which Mr Gladstone has applied it is unfounded,

But that is not the point to which I want to call your attention. If I desired to give an illustration of what I think is Mr Gladstone's incapacity to deal with large questions of foreign policy, I should certainly select the superstitious admiration he has of the European concert as an instrument for managing Eastern affairs. I am perfectly ready to admit that the concert of Great Powers, if it can be obtained, is an admirable thing; but Mr Gladstone's belief in it goes much further than that. His idea is that there should be a line of policy pursued by the Great Powers acting, so to speak, in their corporate capacity, and nothing ought to be done in the East except in that way. I do not hesitate to say that a more absurd machine for carrying out any continuous policy than the concert of the Great Powers does not exist. I might, gentlemen, appeal to experience. What has the concert of the Great Powers ever done? The battle of Navarino, which liberated Greece, was done in the teeth of some of the Great Powers. The separation of Egypt from Turkey was done in the teeth of some of the Great Powers. Nay, from Mr Gladstone's own admissions, I would draw the conclusion that the Great Powers have been a feeble instrument for obtaining the ends they are supposed to have in view. What, in his opinion, have been those ends during the last twenty years? Among other things, the welfare of the subject-populations of the Porte, because, since the Treaty of Paris, these subject-populations have been under the tutelage of the Great Powers of Europe. During that period England was one of the Powers most interested; and in its councils during a great part of that period Mr Gladstone was himself sometimes an important member of the Cabinet, and at one time was its chief. Since 1876, we have been aware, though nobody ever before suspected it, that Mr Gladstone has always been keenly alive to the fate of the subject-populations of the Porte. We might therefore suppose that the European concert was acting under highly favourable conditions. Yet, what has it done? Nothing. According to Mr Gladstone's own admission, the condition of those populations got worse instead of better; and therefore I say that we have ample evidence from experience that the concert of the European Powers is a perfectly worthless instrument. But we do not need experience to show this: common-sense shows it at once. The Great Powers are influenced by different views, different aims, and different traditions. They can only act if they all agree together. How often and for how long may we expect them to agree? Mr Gladstone, in praising this European machinery, said that "the common action of the Great Powers is fatal to selfish views." It never seemed to have occurred to him that selfish views were absolutely fatal to common action. Many of you have probably served on

committees. These decide what action they will pursue by means of the voice of the majority. Yet all know the difficulty of deciding any question in such a committee, and you will therefore easily understand the difficulty of deciding on common action in a committee of six in which a single member can at any time paralyse the action of the other five. The European concert is, in fact, an instrument for doing as little as possible with the greatest possible amount of friction.

Now, gentlemen, I come to some particular criticisms of Mr Gladstone upon the Eastern policy of the Government. And here I must go back, following his example, to what is almost ancient history—I mean to the time before the Russo-Turkish war. He has said regarding that period, over and over again, that everything would have gone well, that war would have been avoided, that liberty would have been secured for the subject-populations of the Porte, had England only consented, in concert with the other European Powers, to coerce Turkey. Now, without going minutely into that question, I ask you to reflect for one moment on the general conditions which had to be fulfilled before successful coercion could have been accomplished. In the first place, Mr Gladstone admits that coercion, if I understand him rightly, would not have been desirable if it had ended in the use of force. He assumes, in other words, that that policy would only have been a right policy if Turkey had yielded to the pressure of Europe. Now I want to know what probability there was that Turkey would have so yielded at that time? We know she was perfectly ready to brave war with Russia, because she did so immediately afterwards. She must have known then that Russia was by far the strongest Power, and that Russia was prepared to go to extremities with her. What probability is there that Turkey would have yielded to the pressure of Europe, knowing, as Turkey would have known, that that pressure never would have ended in the exercise of force? There is not any probability. When the threat of the overwhelming force on the part of Russia failed to move her, can we suppose that pressure, not to be followed by force, would have had the effect of bending her will? The idea is chimerical. Next, I want to know what probability is there that actual force could have been exercised by the six Powers in concert with any advantage? In order that the force could be exercised with any probability of good results, you must assume that every Power in Europe was interested solely in the welfare of the subject-populations of the Porte, and had no selfish objects in view. I shall not dwell on the question as to whether particular Powers had or had not selfish views; but I ask those who are acquainted with the history of the past five years what grounds there were for thinking that the six Powers

of Europe were prepared to agree, with purely disinterested motives, in pressing this coercion on Turkey? If you ask yourselves this question, I am sure you will be left in no doubt as to the result of the measure which Mr Gladstone looks back to as the neglected panacea and remedy for all the evils that have since occurred. You will be convinced, that just as at that time no result at all could be anticipated from the threat of pressure, no good result could be anticipated from the exercise of pressure. Now, gentlemen, I pass from the time immediately before the Russo-Turkish war to the time succeeding it; and I understand, with regard to the period succeeding the Russo-Turkish war, that Mr Gladstone has in the main two accusations against the Government, and they are both included in this one,—that we have increased the power of Russia. Gentlemen, that accusation, as it stands, I venture to describe as grotesque. I am perfectly certain that there is not a single man on the continent of Europe—be he Frenchman, German, Italian, or Russian—who believes for one moment that the result of our action has been to increase the power of Russia. The universal belief, both among those who like England and those who dislike her, has been that what she has done has been to curtail that power. There is no doubt whatever that amongst the foremost people who held that belief are the Russians themselves. And, gentlemen, in what way does Mr Gladstone say we have increased the power of Russia? Why, in two ways. First, in regard to Bessarabia. He says: "Lord Salisbury met with Count Schouvaloff and agreed that he would support the restoration to the despotic power of Russia of that country north of the Danube which at that moment constituted the portion of a free state." And then he goes on to say: "Why, gentlemen, what had been done by the Liberal Government? Russia, which was a Danubian Power, lost her position, by the action of the Liberal Government, on the Danube." I may remark, before going on, that at the time when the Liberal Government performed this feat of driving Russia back from the Danube, Mr Gladstone himself was in Opposition, and was, unless I am greatly mistaken, attacking that Liberal Government by every means in his power. I believe I am right in that, as far as I recollect. But what I want to ask now is, Was it our duty to imitate the Liberal Government of 1856, and drive back Russia from the Danube? The position of matters was this: Russia had the territory of Bessarabia within her grasp. The interests threatened by her permanent possession of it were not English interests at all. If they were anybody's concern besides those of Bessarabia and Roumania, they were the interests of Austria or Germany; but neither Austria nor Germany would have lifted a finger to remove Bessarabia from the grasp of the Czar.

So that if we had attempted to prevent Russia carrying out her intentions in that respect, we should have had to do it single-handed. I do not know whether Mr Gladstone actually would have desired us to go to war with Russia in such a cause. He is very fond of letting it be understood that, on proper occasions, he himself would have been capable of a very spirited foreign policy with regard to Russia. He almost hints that he would have liked to have gone to war with that Power, not only about Bessarabia, but about Afghanistan also. Yet I recollect an occasion on which Russia acted in a manner which much more nearly concerned England—and that was when she declared she would no longer be bound by the clause of the Treaty concerning the Black Sea: did we ever hear that at that time Mr Gladstone was inflamed by any military ardour? Though that was a matter which much more nearly affected the interests of this country than the retrocession of Bessarabia, he bore it with admirable meekness. So much, gentlemen, for the first way in which we have increased the power of Russia by our action. Now I come to the second: and here I think Mr Gladstone's language far less justifiable, and far more likely to produce mischief than that which he used about Bessarabia. Let me read to you what he said about Batoum: "Lord Salisbury has lately stated to the country that by the Treaty of Berlin the port of Batoum is to be only a commercial port. If the Treaty of Berlin stated that it was to be only a commercial port, it could not be made into an arsenal, and that fact would be very important." Then he goes on: "Why, gentlemen, Leith is an essentially commercial port, but there is nothing to prevent the people of this country—if in their wisdom or in their folly they should think fit—from converting Leith into a great arsenal or naval fortification." These words can only bear one construction. Mr Gladstone is of opinion that under the Treaty of Berlin Russia is quite as much at liberty to turn Batoum into an arsenal as we at this moment are to turn Leith into an arsenal. Now, gentlemen, let me make plain this matter to you. In the Treaty of Berlin there is a clause entirely devoted to the assertion that Batoum is to be essentially a commercial port. Mr Gladstone has a great opinion of the wisdom of the European Powers in their collective capacity, and I want to know what meaning he supposed the European Powers attached to that clause? Batoum was given to Russia by the Treaty. By the Treaty Russia was told that it was to be essentially a commercial port. But, gentlemen, if Russia may, under that Treaty, make it anything it likes—an arsenal, or anything else it chooses—what on earth is the use of putting anything at all about it in the Treaty? There was a time when Russian diplomacy was not in very good odour in

this country, when it was supposed Russian diplomatists were not above taking advantage of any flaw which misdirected ingenuity could discover. Yet I should consider it an insult to Russian diplomacy if I said that this interpretation of Mr Gladstone's was worthy of it. Its falsity, indeed, is not merely shown, though it is sufficiently shown, by the words of the Treaty interpreted in the light of common-sense. For, as you are all aware, treaties like this of Berlin are preceded by meetings of the Plenipotentiaries, and the proceedings of the Plenipotentiaries in these meetings are embodied in protocols. These are signed after each day's sittings by all the Plenipotentiaries; and they are not merely records of what has occurred, like the newspaper reports of a debate in the House of Commons,—they are diplomatic announcements by the various Powers, which have an authoritative character. Now, at one of these meetings of the Conference Lord Salisbury made this assertion. He said: "Lord Salisbury understands that Batoum is to be only a commercial port, and therefore accepts in principle the *status quo ante* for the Straits." The meaning of that assertion of Lord Salisbury is this,—on the understanding that Batoum is to be (not *essentially*, in Mr Gladstone's meaning of the word, but) *only* a commercial port, I, on behalf of England, will assent to the Straits being closed against vessels of war; in other words, if Batoum is not to be a commercial port, the Straits shall be open to vessels of war, and we shall be able to send our fleet into the Black Sea. And that assertion of Lord Salisbury is in the protocols of the Conference at Berlin, with which Mr Gladstone, I should have supposed, would by this time have made himself thoroughly acquainted.

Now, gentlemen, I pass from Europe to Cyprus. But before I do so there is one matter I should like to touch upon, and that is the question of what is known as the Salisbury-Schouvaloff agreement. You all know the abuse which was heaped on the present Foreign Secretary after that document had become public, and that abuse has been levelled at him by statesmen who are so well acquainted, or who ought to be so well acquainted, with the way in which foreign negotiations must be managed and always have been managed, that they should have known better. What is the accusation which they bring against the Government for this preliminary agreement with Russia? What they say is this,—they say you are asking for a European conference to decide the affairs of Europe, yet before that conference meets you decide the affairs of Europe behind its back. That is the accusation. Now, gentlemen, I should like to say a word upon that. You will see at once that the accusation can have no weight or significance unless the agreement com-

plained of binds the conference. If the two Powers, by meeting together before the conference, were able by their united action to bind the decision of the conference, no doubt there may be something in the accusation. But no action of England and Russia together could by any possibility bind the conference. The conference of European Powers was as free after that agreement as it was before. Supposing that before going into the House of Commons I was to make an arrangement with some other member as to the vote I was going to give, would Parliament thereby be bound? Supposing I was to agree with any number of people, would Parliament be bound by that vote? It might be replied, "Yes, if you were to agree with the majority beforehand, Parliament would be bound." But in conferences matters are not settled by a majority. Every single Power is able at its own discretion to break up the conference. Therefore there is no possibility of any agreement between any two Powers, or any three Powers, having any effect whatever in binding the decision of the conference; or, in other words, binding any Power which was not a party to that agreement. But I go further, and say that no conference has any chance of success unless the Powers which are more especially interested meet together, before the conference, and come to some agreement among themselves. There were agreements between separate Powers before the Congress of Vienna; and I may tell you, gentlemen, that though England and Russia are the only two Powers who are commonly known to have come to an understanding before the Conference of Berlin, they are by no means the only Powers who actually did so. And it could not be otherwise. To say that no such agreements were to be made, to say that Powers were not to come to any understanding with each other as to the course they were to pursue in conference before the conference met, would be to foredoom it to failure before its meeting. I hope, gentlemen, that by these few remarks I have clearly explained a matter which has been greatly misrepresented and misunderstood, so that there should be no excuse for anybody in the future misunderstanding the action of the Government.

Gentlemen, misrepresentation is thick with regard to the policy of the Government in Europe; but I think that the misrepresentations with regard to their policy in Europe are as nothing compared to the misrepresentation of their policy in Cyprus. In almost the last speech that Mr Gladstone made, he used very strong language about a parallel which Lord Salisbury drew the other day between our recent occupation of Cyprus and our seizure of Malta and Gibraltar in past times. This, Mr Gladstone was good enough to say, was more like the statement

of a political bandit than that of an English Minister. Now, gentlemen, in the first place, Mr Gladstone, I need hardly say, has altogether misunderstood the drift of Lord Salisbury's remarks. It is perfectly true that in his speech at Manchester Lord Salisbury drew a parallel or comparison between our occupation of Cyprus and our seizure of Gibraltar and Malta; but the parallel had no reference to the mode of their acquisition, but only to their utility to us when acquired. He did not mean, nor did he say, that we got Cyprus in the way that we got Gibraltar and Malta; but that having got Cyprus, it was useful to us in the same kind of way as Gibraltar was, or as Malta was. Mr Gladstone appears to assume that we committed an act of robbery in acquiring Cyprus. Now let us consider the conditions under which we got Cyprus. In the first place, our opponents themselves are very fond of asserting, when it suits their purpose, that we paid more for Cyprus than its value. They are always telling us "what a bad bargain you have got in Cyprus; you pay more to the Turk in money than he could ever get from the island; and besides the money-payment, you have entered into all sorts of onerous engagements on his behalf: do you mean to say that this little island is worth as much as that?" Again, it cannot be denied that the Turks entered into this arrangement willingly — as, indeed, might naturally be expected, considering the advantages they gain by it. So that we are now in a position exactly to understand what Mr Gladstone means by the act of a political bandit. He means occupying a man's territory with his full consent, and paying for it more than its value. I can only say, gentlemen, that, speaking to you as a distressed landlord, I should like to be robbed in that way, and on as large a scale as possible.

So much for the method by which Cyprus has been acquired. Now let me touch for a moment on the Anglo-Turkish Convention, the instrument by which we acquired it. There are two accusations made against us with regard to that Anglo-Turkish Convention. The one is, that by the Anglo-Turkish Convention we broke the European concert; and the other is, that we took upon ourselves too great responsibilities. The accusation about the European concert amounts to this: Mr Gladstone says that Europe since 1856 has determined that the affairs of Turkey shall be the affairs of Europe as a whole, and not of any part of Europe; that by the Anglo-Turkish Convention we have made the affairs of Turkey our concern apart from the rest of Europe; and that by doing so we have broken the European concert and overridden the Treaty of Paris. Well, if that is the meaning of the European concert—and that must be the meaning according to Mr Gladstone—the European concert has never

existed; and for this reason, that directly after the Treaty of Paris, by which the affairs of Turkey were placed under the six Powers, another treaty was concluded called the Tripartite Treaty, by which Austria, France, and England bound themselves as between each other to protect the integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore if the European concert is broken by the fact that any one or more Powers, other than the six Great Powers, concern themselves with the affairs of Turkey,—if that constitutes a breach of the European concert, then it has been broken ever since 1856, and I may dismiss that accusation altogether. Then I come to the other accusation—that, namely, which relates to the responsibilities that we have brought upon ourselves by the Convention; and these, gentlemen, are asserted to be of two kinds—military and administrative. With regard to the first, Mr Gladstone, as far as I understand him, says that we are bound by that Convention to send an army in case of war to the Armenian frontier. We are not bound to do anything of the kind. We are bound to assist the Turks against the Russians if the Russians attack the Armenian frontier. We are not bound to give that assistance in any particular manner; nor have we been so foolish as to pledge ourselves to any particular military manœuvre. In engaging to assist the Turks to the best of our ability we have certainly not defined the precise manner in which that assistance is to be given. The other point, as to the administrative responsibilities we have incurred, may be very shortly disposed of. Mr Gladstone stated on more than one occasion that we have made ourselves responsible for the good government of Asia Minor. That statement is entirely incorrect. We have made ourselves responsible for nothing of the kind. The responsibility lies with the Turk—it does not lie with us; and when Mr Gladstone says that it does, it only shows that he has not read the articles of the Convention with that attention which so important an instrument demands. So much, gentlemen, for the Anglo-Turkish Convention. I now come to Cyprus itself, and here Mr Gladstone attacks us for having passed two ordinances which he thinks are a disgrace to any Government. One of the ordinances, you will recollect, which he deals with, provides that the Government of Cyprus shall, under certain circumstances, be able to banish any individual whom they may regard as dangerous to the island; and Mr Gladstone, amidst cries of "shame," directed all the force of his eloquence against what he was pleased to describe as "a disgrace to this country," and a "scandal before the world." Mr Gladstone, however, forgot to mention, or was unaware, that a law of similar import is already in force in others of our colonies, and was so in force

under the last Government. Therefore, in introducing a similar law into Cyprus, the present Government have at all events not stepped beyond precedent. I do not mean to say that this is by itself a full justification, but it shows at any rate that the question before us is one of expediency and not principle; that it should be discussed on its merits, and not summarily dismissed with a few strong epithets. Now I have not time to go into a detailed justification of that measure, but I will draw your attention to two considerations. The ordinance is directed, as perhaps you are aware, against political agitators—and the political agitator in the East is a much more important individual than perhaps you have any idea of. He is to be found all over the Balkan Peninsula in the service of this or that Government, or of this or that interest. Nor will any one acquainted with the East venture to assert that the danger which this statute was intended to guard against is altogether illusory. In the next place, the ordinance is surrounded with safeguards. It is not in the power of the Governor to banish a man on his sole responsibility and without assigning a reason. He has to get the consent of the Legislative Council of the island; and on the Council are, besides the *ex officio* members, a Turk, a Greek, and an Italian. Not only that, but the Governor, having banished a man, has immediately to report the fact to the Secretary of State at home; and if that is not sufficient, there is a watchful Opposition in Parliament ready enough to take up anything that can be made to redound to the discredit of the Government. You will easily believe, therefore, that this power, great as it is, is not likely to be abused; and I may mention that it has never yet been found necessary to put it into operation. Mr Gladstone, however, is not content with criticising laws which really exist: he has taken the trouble to invent one, apparently for the sole purpose of criticising it. He asserts that, by an ordinance we have passed in Cyprus, we forbid any foreigner to buy land. I have only to say in regard to Mr Gladstone's statement on this, as on many other subjects, that it is incorrect. There is no statute preventing a foreigner from buying land.*

Gentlemen, I cannot now deal with all the subjects that I would have liked to deal with, but I must say one word, before leaving Cyprus, on the subject of the harbour of Famagosta. Mr Gladstone poured derision upon the harbour of Famagosta, and drew an elaborate parallel between the harbour of Famagosta

* Mr Gladstone may have been misled (though it seems difficult to believe it) by an ordinance which requires foreigners to obtain a licence before buying land. This enactment has no tendency, either in theory or in practice, to check the purchase of land for legitimate purposes, and it has never yet been found necessary to refuse a licence.

and the harbour of Alderney, on which a late Government—I think a Liberal Government—spent vast sums of money, and produced no results whatever. Well, I looked into a book of Sir Samuel Baker's which Mr Gladstone quoted, thinking that he might have got his information out of that, and been misled by it. What did I find there? I found that Sir Samuel Baker asserts that every competent authority is of opinion that, at very small expense, a magnificent harbour might be constructed at Famagosta—superior to that at Malta. Well, gentlemen, Mr Gladstone has not got his information from Sir Samuel Baker, nor yet can he have got it from the papers laid before Parliament, because in the latter Admiral Hornby has given a report, in which he says that very little dredging would make Famagosta a magnificent harbour; that it is situated at about 250 miles—not 300 miles as Mr Gladstone says—from Egypt, and is in a most central position for a coaling depot. All competent authorities have admitted that Famagosta might be made a good harbour. Nevertheless all competent authorities might be wrong, and Mr Gladstone might be right. But, unfortunately for Mr Gladstone, Famagosta as it is at present is an efficient harbour — not so good as it might be made; but it is at this moment a fair harbour, and you can do there what you cannot do at Malta. Not two months ago the Mediterranean fleet went in in double column —a manœuvre which cannot be executed at Malta—and anchored there; yet Mr Gladstone boldly says, not only that there is no port at Famagosta which will accommodate British ships of war, but that there never will be!

In passing now from Cyprus to India, let me say one word about Abyssinia. In his speech at the Corn Exchange, Mr Gladstone threw out a challenge to the Government, you will recollect, with regard to the expenses of the Abyssinian war. He said that, in regard to the Abyssinian war, the Government dissolved, after telling the country that they only owed £5,000,000; and that when they, the Liberals, came into office, they discovered that the cost of that war approached £9,000,000.* He challenged the Government to contradict that statement,—and he said it with the air of a man who did not think it would be contradicted, and would be very sorry if it were. Gentlemen, I am not a member of the Government, but I am ready to take up Mr Gladstone's challenge. It is perfectly true that when the Government prorogued they believed that the expenses would amount to only £5,000,000, and that was according to the last information derived from India. On the 1st of December of 1868, Sir Stafford Northcote, who was Secretary of State for India, pressed the Government of Bombay for complete accounts; but mark

* See Appendix.

this, it was not till the 17th of December that the first intimation was received that an expenditure approaching £9,000,000 would be reached. Well, Parliament was dissolved on the 11th of November, and the new Parliament reassembled on the 10th of December, so that it was more than a month after the dissolution that the news was received, and nearly a week after the reassembling of the new Parliament. So much for the shortcomings of the last Conservative Ministry. Now I shall speak very briefly about India. You will recollect that Mr Gladstone accuses the present Government of having by their extravagance produced a deficit of £6,000,000 in the finances of the United Kingdom. Having made that accusation against the home Government, listen to what he says about the Indian Government: "It was after the disappearance of Lord Northbrook that the new policy, of which you have had a nearer knowledge in Europe, began to develop itself in India, and with the commencement of that new policy, so fatally accurate is the machinery that is set at work, there began the reign of deficiency." If that sentence means anything, it means that the deficit in the Indian Exchequer was caused by a policy as characteristic of a Conservative Government as that which at home produced a deficiency of £6,000,000. Now Mr Gladstone is perfectly right in saying that, in the four years from 1876-77 to 1879-80, there was a deficiency in the Indian Exchequer of nearly £6,000,000. But observe how that deficiency arose. In that period there was more than £8,000,000 spent in famine relief, and there was more than £11,000,000 lost in the exchanges through the low price of silver. If I compare with those figures the figures in the seven years which Mr Gladstone claims as the years during which a good financial system prevailed, I find that while there was a surplus of six and a half millions, there was spent on famine relief—I give it in round numbers—about six millions and a half, and through loss by exchange a little over £5,000,000. If from the two periods under discussion we exclude famine relief and loss by exchange, which we are bound to do, considering that neither the one nor the other could be possibly supposed to be owing to the policy of the Government, I find that the average surplus per annum under Lord Northbrook's Administration was about £2,500,000; under Lord Lytton's it was nearly £3,500,000. When you reflect, gentlemen, that Mr Gladstone made that statement about Indian deficits to a multitude of people who probably knew nothing whatever about Indian finance, but knew that Mr Gladstone was a great financial authority, I think you will agree with me that he showed on that occasion something like culpable carelessness.

Now, gentlemen, I turn to Afghanistan; but in order that

you may fully understand the temper of mind in which Mr Gladstone approaches the subject of European interference in Central Asia, let me read to you an extract which I cut out of one of his speeches in regard to the advance of the Russians in those regions: "The position of Russia in Central Asia I believe to be one that has in the main been forced upon her against her will. She has been compelled—and this is the impartial opinion of the world—she has been compelled to extend her frontier southwards in Central Asia by causes in some degree analogous, but certainly more stringent and imperative, than the causes which have commonly led us to extend, far more importantly, our frontier in India." That is Mr Gladstone's judgment upon the advance of Russia, which, whatever its motive, has added largely to her territory. Now, gentlemen, I want you to compare with that his judgment on the Government of his own country, which, without any wish to extend its territories, has been obliged, in self-defence, to enter upon the operations in Afghanistan. How does he describe these operations? He says they are *mean, shabby, dastardly;* that they showed *cupidity;* that they were *wilfully unjust* and *destructive.* There you have a comparison of his views of the Russian Government and of the English Government. Now, gentlemen, let me recall to your mind for one moment the causes which have led to our action in Afghanistan. I shall simply indicate them. There is no Indian statesman, I believe, of any authority who has ventured to deny that the condition of Afghanistan was important to us in an altogether special and exceptional way, and that we could not look upon the attitude of the ruler of Afghanistan with the same calm indifference with which we could look upon the ruler, under ordinary circumstances, of a neighbouring state; and the ground of that opinion is that it is universally recognised—and is recognised by Mr Gladstone himself in one of his speeches, I think the Glasgow one—that it is necessary to our Indian empire that on its north-west frontier there should be a friendly State guarding and maintaining the passes. Now, gentlemen, our Government also thought it was necessary to have a friendly Power guarding and maintaining the passes. Unfortunately they found that they had not got one. They had conclusive evidence—evidence which every day tended to confirm—that they could not possibly rely upon the fidelity of the Ameer of Afghanistan. It was necessary, under these circumstances, that he should admit an Envoy whom we could trust. It was necessary that he should admit an Envoy; and the fact that he refused to admit one was one indication that he was not the faithful guardian of the passes whom Mr Gladstone considers to be necessary, or at all events highly important, for the

safety of our Eastern possessions. Among other indications of the unfriendly feeling of the Ameer towards us, we found that he intrigued with Russia, and finally admitted a Russian Envoy. What does Mr Gladstone hereupon say? He says: "If you wanted to go to war with anybody you ought to have gone to war with Russia; it was mean, it was cowardly, to go to war with Afghanistan." Now, in the first place, the offence of Russia was not of an aggravated nature, because at the time Russia sent her Envoy to Afghanistan, the relations between Russia and England in Europe were of the most strained description. If, under such circumstances, Russia overstepped the strict limits of international obligation (into which we need not now inquire), at all events her offence may be judged leniently. But that does not show the full absurdity of Mr Gladstone's idea. He seems to think we went to war with Shere Ali out of the mere wantonness of revenge, for what I might almost call the fun of the thing, and that if we wanted to revenge ourselves, the proper people with which to make war were the Russians. But the great object of our policy was not revenge—it was security. And how was security to be obtained—how were we to obtain that friendly State to guard and maintain the passes by going to war with Russia? I think even Mr Gladstone's ingenuity will fail to inform us.

Gentlemen, let me pass by a sudden transition from Afghanistan to England, and let me mention one of the circumstances about that event which we are all looking forward to with so much interest—the dissolution. Mr Gladstone has invented—for this occasion only—a new constitutional principle; and it is this, that you ought never to allow a Parliament to run to seven sessions, because if you do, in the last session jobbery will always reign triumphant. The reason why it will reign triumphant is this,—that when everybody knows there must be a dissolution, various cliques will always press their schemes upon the Government, to the detriment of the national interests. But it never seems to have occurred to Mr Gladstone that if people knew there would be a dissolution after the sixth session these cliques would be quite as ready to press their schemes upon the Government then as they ever could be during the seventh session; so that this constitutional principle, such as it is, appears to be fitted only for an Irish Parliament—if an Irish Parliament is ever to exist. There is not only, however, this objection, founded on what I may call the intrinsic absurdity of Mr Gladstone's constitutional principle. There is another objection which has been pointed out to him, that he himself was a member of a Government which carried on Parliament during seven sessions—from 1859 to 1865. This was pointed out to Mr Gladstone in the newspapers, and he took

occasion to reply to it in one of his later speeches—I forget in which, there were so many—but I think it was at Glasgow. And what was his reply? In substance it was this. He said: "Our first session—the session of 1859—was really only half a session; you cannot count it; it was a sort of thing you cannot in fairness count." I was rather astonished at this, and I took the trouble to look out the dates. Here they are. This Parliament began on the 5th of March 1874; the session of 1859—the first of what, for convenience, I may call Mr Gladstone's Parliament—began on the 31st of May. Excluding the Easter holidays, which occurred between the beginning of March and the end of May, I make out—unless my arithmetic is wrong—that the difference between our first session—that is, the session of 1874—and Mr Gladstone's first session of 1859, was about nine weeks. Observe, therefore, gentlemen, how delicately poised is the British Constitution. It is perfectly secure if you curtail the first session out of seven by nine weeks; restore those nine weeks and the Constitution is shaken to its foundation!

Now, gentlemen, though I have not exhausted the vast field of misrepresentation provided by Mr Gladstone for future Conservative orators, I fear that in the meantime I must have exhausted your patience. I have been obliged to point out in more than one instance that Mr Gladstone has altogether misrepresented facts; and that in other cases he has drawn altogether false deductions from facts. Now let me repeat again that I do not accuse Mr Gladstone of any want of conscientiousness. I believe that his hatred of the present Government is such that any assertion that tells against them he is irresistibly moved to believe; and that any assertion that tells in their favour he regards as *ipso facto* incredible. If it should be suddenly discovered that two and two making four was a fact that told in favour of her Majesty's Government, he would conscientiously believe that two and two made five,—that it was violating a great principle of international morality to believe the contrary,—and that the late Sir Robert Peel had always been of that opinion. A friend has just intimated—but I do not know if the intimation will meet with your approval—that I should say something upon the subject of the Church. You may recollect, then, gentlemen, that at Manchester Lord Salisbury gave a warning to the Mid-Lothian electors. Lord Salisbury said, in effect, that when Mr Gladstone was canvassing Lancashire a dozen years ago, he announced that the Irish Church was outside the sphere of practical politics; but that, nevertheless, only a short time elapsed before the Irish Church was discovered to be an iniquitous institution which could not be too soon destroyed,—a political Upas-tree which, without further delay, must be cut down; and Lord Salisbury

warned the Mid-Lothian electors that, if Mr Gladstone announced for the moment that the destruction of the Scotch Church was outside the sphere of practical politics, they might find that but a short time would elapse before Mr Gladstone would undergo a conversion as rapid and not less effectual. These remarks of Lord Salisbury called forth a reply on the first day Mr Gladstone came to Mid-Lothian,—a reply which, I venture to think, contained one of the most curious pieces of autobiography which had ever been vouchsafed by a great statesman to the public. Lord Salisbury had ventured upon no hypothesis as to how it came about that the Irish Church suddenly ceased to be a matter outside practical politics, and became a matter which should be dealt with at once by a strong hand. But Mr Gladstone has himself supplied the omission; he has given to an astonished world the reasons which converted him from the idea that the Irish Church might be left as it stood, to the idea that it was a Upas-tree which must be instantly destroyed. One of these reasons was, that two policemen were shot in Manchester; and another was, that a prison was blown up in London. Ever since—in an unlucky moment — Lord Hartington, the titular leader of the Liberal party, came down to Scotland, and, under the inspiration of Mr Adam, announced that the Established Church might very well be dealt with, it had been a constant object of Scotch Liberal statesmen to reassure their friends in the Established Church. With this laudable object, they have administered to them a great variety of consolations; but the consolations administered by Mr Gladstone are surely the most extraordinary and most remarkable of all. He told his friends—if he has any friends in the Established Church —that a "just and fair" anxiety prevailed among them lest they should be condemned without having what he called a "fair trial;" and he endeavoured to reassure them by telling them that a fair trial they should certainly have. Gentlemen, you have probably heard of an old method of deciding causes, known as "ordeal by battle," in which the accuser and the accused fought, judgment being always given in favour of the victor. It is in the certainty of *that* kind of "fair trial" that Mr Gladstone expects the Church of Scotland to find substantial comfort. We know what shape this fair trial will take, because we have already seen an example of it in the case of the Irish Church. A fair trial means that Mr Gladstone will stump the country from one end to another,—that the whole Liberal organisation would be set to work, and every other means used to inflame men's minds against the doomed institution. If the members of the Established Church find in these utterances of Mr Gladstone any security for the safety, the prosperity, and the continuance of

that Church, then they are more easily taken in than I would give them credit for.

Gentlemen, you have greatly mistaken the drift of my speech if you suppose my object has been to merely show that the accusations of Mr Gladstone against the Government have no foundation. His bitter and somewhat reckless criticism supplies (as I think I have shown you) a very unsafe guide for judging the past; but it may furnish a warning for the future, of which the country will do well to take heed. If it gives no trustworthy account of the character of the present Government, we may find in it clear indication of what the character of the next one will be. Mr Gladstone says that the Ministry now in office may be judged by their actions, and that the country has ample material for judging. I agree with him; and I also think that in Mr Gladstone's speeches the country has ample material for estimating the qualities which we may expect to find in their successors. The question, gentlemen, for you to decide is not simply whether you will continue your allegiance to the Government against whom such speeches have been made, but whether you will transfer your allegiance to the party whose opinions and judgments such speeches embody. Mr Gladstone is by far the most eminent representative of those politicians who advocate what we must now call the Liberal foreign policy—notwithstanding that many good Liberals look at it with small favour. Whether we admire that policy, or whether we think, as all of us assembled here probably do think, that it shows a lack of insight into the true principles by which this country should be guided, nobody can deny that those who have advocated it have shown an extraordinary mastery of fine phrases. They have freedom, international law, justice, always on their lips. They exhibit a most remarkable power of manipulating scraps of morality which, although no doubt excellent in themselves, are by themselves hardly a sufficient guide in the conduct of foreign affairs. The only Government I ever heard of which has surpassed them in this particular art, was the Government of France in the last decade of the last century—perhaps the most mischievous and the most destructive Government which ever existed. The Conservative party I believe to be as interested in the cause of humanity, in the cause of freedom, in the cause of progress, in the cause of international right, as any other party in the State. But I do not believe that these great objects will be less attained, because it puts first the safety, the honour, and the wellbeing of the great country committed to its charge.

# APPENDIX.

## MR GLADSTONE AND THE ABYSSINIAN WAR.

[To the Editor of the Scotsman.]

Mr Gladstone has written the following letter to a gentleman in Edinburgh who called his attention to criticisms by Mr Balfour, M.P., upon his statements in reference to the Conservative Government's finance of the Abyssinian war. Mr Balfour's statements were made in an address which he recently delivered to a Conservative Association :—

Hawarden Castle, Chester,
*December* 17, 1879.

Dear Sir,—Your appeal to me is most legitimate. I have referred to the 'Scotsman,' and I understand that the fuller statement in the 'Courant' agrees with it.

The fact before us is a very grave one. It is that, while an expenditure approaching nine millions was incurred in 1867-68 for the Abyssinian war, Parliament and the country were left, until 1869, under the belief that the expenditure was within five millions. The question is whether this fact, which is of a nature fatal to all parliamentary control, was due to a wilful reticence, or to a most gross administrative miscarriage, highly discreditable to any Government.

Mr Balfour seems to exult in the belief that he has taken the transaction out of the former category and placed it in the latter.

But he has not. What he says is that the Government made no inquiry about the probable charge (or got no answer) between the Budget and the 1st of December, and that the answer to their inquiry of the 1st came on the 17th.

Mr Balfour is evidently in the secrets of the Departments. I wish he had more liberally told them. But what he shows is that, for some reason not stated, but evidently very special, during seven months after the Budget, and during six months after the war was ended (I speak in round numbers), the Government, charged with the care of our purses, remained wholly ignorant of its cost, and forbore to ask until the dissolution was over, and (December 1) they had determined to resign.

Why did they so forbear to ask ?

There may be a satisfactory reply, but we have not yet had it; and Mr Balfour has not only given no reply, but he has confined himself to official communications, and has not said whether the Indian authorities did or did not convey unofficially, during these seven months, their knowledge or belief that the expenditure would exceed five millions.

I hope that if Sir Stafford Northcote refers to this matter at Leeds, he will do it fully and conclusively, and therefore in a manner altogether different from Mr Balfour. You are, of course, free to publish this letter,—and I remain, Dear Sir, your faithful servant,

W. E. Gladstone.

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Whittinghame, *December* 30, 1879.

Sir,—My attention has been called to a letter of Mr Gladstone's which appeared in your issue of the 19th inst., and which criticised some remarks I made in a speech, delivered at Edinburgh on the 12th inst., relative to the expenditure on account of the Abyssinian war incurred by the Conservative Government of 1867-68.

Mr Gladstone states the case in the following words: "The fact before us is a very grave one. It is that, while an expenditure approaching nine millions was incurred in 1867-68 for the Abyssinian war, Parliament and the country were left, until 1869, under the belief that the expenditure was within five millions. The question is whether this fact, which is of a nature fatal to all parliamentary control, was due to a wilful reticence, or to a most gross administrative miscarriage, highly discreditable to any Government. Mr Balfour seems to exult in the belief that he has taken the transaction out of the former category and placed it in the latter."

On this statement of the question I have to remark, first, that as I never admitted that the Ministry of 1867 must necessarily be guilty *either* of "wilful reticence" *or* "gross administrative miscarriage," it is a singular perversion of my argument to say that because I have shown that they cannot justly be accused of the former offence, I "exult in the belief" that they committed the latter. As a matter of fact, I believe they were innocent of both.

In the second place, let me point out that the question I was primarily concerned with in my speech was not the defects or merits of a previous Administration (a matter chiefly of historic interest), but the kind and quality of the facts and arguments by which Mr Gladstone has sought to persuade the electors of Mid-Lothian, as he has already persuaded himself, that the present Administration has committed, or may be expected to commit, almost every species of political crime. One of the methods by which he endeavoured to do this, and one of the most characteristic, was to imply that as there was very good ground for thinking that a Conservative Government had wilfully kept back information from Parliament twelve years ago with respect to the liabilities of the country, so a Conservative Government

might now be expected to pursue a similar course. In answer to this, I pointed out incidentally that, as the Government of 1867 did not possess the information in question, they could not possibly have kept it back; but, if I understand Mr Gladstone rightly, he now thinks that, if they did not possess the information, it was because they intentionally abstained from asking for it till after the dissolution. He admits the ignorance, but asserts that it was wilful, and therefore guilty.

For this charge I believe there is not the shadow of foundation. The Abyssinian Expedition was not completely terminated till the end of October 1868. Parliament was prorogued on the 31st July. So far, therefore, as the House of Commons was concerned, the Ministry necessarily contented itself with giving estimates, and all it could do was to give the best estimates it possessed. This it did; and if we are determined to find the causes which made the estimated expenditure fall short of the actual expenditure, we should look for them rather in the peculiar circumstances under which we made war in Abyssinia, and in the unforeseen difficulties which attended the return of the Expedition to India, than in the incompetence or carelessness of the high authorities on whom the Government relied for its information. The Home Government was as little to blame for the delay in the transmission to this country of the completed accounts as it was for the inaccuracy in the original estimates. Their total amount was not accurately known even at the end of July 1870; and if blame for this attaches anywhere (which I am far from implying), it attaches to the Indian rather than to the English Administration.

The Abyssinian Expedition and the questions connected with it have now only a historic interest. Mr Ward Hunt, who was then responsible for the finances of the country, and whose reputation Mr Gladstone's strictures must in the first instance be supposed to affect, is no longer living. Nor is there any question now before the country with which the conduct of the Government of 1869 can be brought into relation, except by a rhetorical artifice. I might, therefore, while addressing an audience interested rather in the politics of the present than of the past, have ignored Mr Gladstone's specific assertions, and have contented myself with showing the absurdity of his practice of making the existing Conservative Ministry bear the burden of all the sins which he detects in the conduct of previous Conservative Ministries—even of those of which he himself was a member. It seemed better, however, not to allow a charge which is one of the most serious that can be brought against a parliamentary statesman, which affects the living as well as the dead, and which was made under circumstances which necessarily gave it the widest possible publicity, to remain altogether unanswered.—I am &c.,

ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR.